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ANTONY ALPERS:  
The Life of Katherine Mansfield  
466pp. Cape. £9.50.  
0 224 01625 3

KATHERINE MANSFIELD:  
The Urewera Notebook  
107pp. Oxford University Press.  
£7.50.  
0 19 558033 3

This is a biography on the highly twentieth-century scale. Readers of Antony Alpers' account of his complete rewriting of his biography of some thirty years ago (TLS, March 28) will know the story of how it came about. Several things have happened since his *Katherine Mansfield* of 1953. There are no longer any personal susceptibilities to be respected; a mass of documentation about Mansfield's generation of writers has landed in the academic vaults; and there are research grants that allow the writing out of writing. Alpers' list of acknowledgments shows that during his nine years' labour on this second book he has left no literary stone unturned: it includes the living and the dead, officials and academics, New Zealanders and Americans and Europeans, friends, husbands and lovers of his subject, Bloomsbury's descendants and Bloomsbury itself. Alpers has done detective work in Germany unearthing a murky period in Mansfield's life followed in her footsteps to mountain health resorts, consulted eighteen great libraries. He has even had the assistance of Philip Larkin in discovering that on Guy Fawkes Night, in Hull, in 1908, something did not happen. (His sense of humour, essential for the job of grappling with Mansfield's tricky life, is so quiet it might be overlooked.)

There may be grumbles that all this biographical machinery is out of proportion to its subject, a girl of slender means, health and output. One answer is that Mansfield's life was more remarkable than the work she had time to do; that if Virginia Woolf, for instance, had died at thirty-four she would only have written *The Voyage Out*. A more substantial point is that the biography has become a picture of the period as well as of Katherine Mansfield: what other writer,

Alpers asks, was involved with Orage's *New Age*; the Laurences; Virginia Woolf; the Garsington set; Middleton Murry's *Rhythm* and *Athenaeum*; and (briefly) with Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Bertrand Russell? Biography, in any case, is not something to be weighed out in exact proportions to its subject's importance; the value can be in the writing of it, and a year of any Mrs Duggins's life could be enthralling if a person and time and place were really re-created.

Alpers does in fact re-creating the life to the published work deliberately and successfully. But even if we only had letters and journals from Mansfield we would have a wonderfully interesting record of experience; particularly of the last five years of a life consciously struggling against illness and approaching death (the only other recorders of this experience I can think of are Darrell and Alice James). Alpers has most industriously filled in the hitherto mysterious few years before she met Murry at twenty-four: a record of a month's trip through the New Zealand countryside; it has now been edited, with much paraphrasing, by Professor Ian A. Gordon of Wellington (The Urewera Notebook). It is not of great interest to anyone but Mansfield devotees, though it shows how well she could write already when undistracted by swooning fantasies. Professor Gordon, however, claims that the biographer's picture of a confused, self-tormenting adolescent needs reassessment. The diary shows that she energetically enjoyed her trip, he says, and what's more, while waiting for her passage she danced, swam, played tennis, went to the theatre. It is difficult to see what this proves, since no one has suggested that she was a personable to great joy from travel and landscape and "normal" life. Professor Gordon seems not to have heard of ambivalence: Mansfield did love her home and her homeland; but as well as dancing, swimming, etc., she was writing. "My mind is like a Russian novel," and "How people ever wish to live here I cannot think," and having an affair with a Maori girl.

She seems to have gone every sort of hog since she was 17. Virginia Woolf was half fascinated and half shocked by what Katherine told of her life; how much she learned, even so, of the years between nineteen and twenty-four that Alpers has excavated? They include the passionate affairs with girls in New Zealand; a pregnancy scare on the voyage to England; recitations at parties to ease out her living; the unexplained marriage to George

—just eighteen years of age—with a rapacious appetite for everything and principles as light as my purse. It is, obviously, the self-description of the average self-inflated schoolgirl (she was in fact the child of an influential and prosperous family); but about the predatory lack of principle she was pretty accurate. Virginia Woolf's first reaction—"an unpleasant but forcible and utterly unscrupulous character"—is in line with a good many other reactions in her quiet here. Chilly regarded on the whole as a child, she perhaps had only the choice between victim's role and victimizer's, and sometimes chose the latter—though she remarkably forgave it.

At nineteen, while waiting for her luggage for passage to England and independence, she made a record of a month's trip through the New Zealand countryside; it has now been edited, with much paraphrasing, by Professor Ian A. Gordon of Wellington (The Urewera Notebook). It is not of great interest to anyone but Mansfield devotees, though it shows how well she could write already when undistracted by swooning fantasies. Professor Gordon, however, claims that the biographer's picture of a confused, self-tormenting adolescent needs reassessment. The diary shows that she energetically enjoyed her trip, he says, and what's more, while waiting for her passage she danced, swam, played tennis, went to the theatre. It is difficult to see what this proves, since no one has suggested that she was a personable to great joy from travel and landscape and "normal" life. Professor Gordon seems not to have heard of ambivalence: Mansfield did love her home and her homeland; but as well as dancing, swimming, etc., she was writing. "My mind is like a Russian novel," and "How people ever wish to live here I cannot think," and having an affair with a Maori girl.

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Bawden whom she left within a few hours; an "elopement" with the twin brother of her teenage idol, going on tour with the opera company he worked for; being packed off to Germany by her parents, losing his baby by a miscarriage. Afterwards there were several more lovers, one of whom later blackmailed her, possibly on abortion, and certainly an operation following venereal disease. For a young woman in the years 1907 to 1912, this was indeed "every sort of hog." Yet even Alpers has not been able to discover who Katherine Mansfield felt about these experiences, how much she was hurt by them, how willingly she had got involved in them. There are some clues in the fiction—though it is curiously sexless. Yet in eighteenth-century fiction, as in the silent film, the room have become powerfully—I want Mata—want her as I have had her terribly. This is unclear I know but true.

The life-story after she met and began to live with Middleton Murry is better known. There were just ten years of her life left: five before the knowledge of her illness (though Alpers believes she had probably had it for years); five afterwards, until her death. Throughout these years she was writing devotedly though sporadically. *Prelude* being published by the Woolfs in 1918 and *Bliss* in 1920; but "The Garden Party" was not finished until fifteen months before her death, and it was towards the end that her writing had started to gutter, uncertain. A certain amount of time had also had to be put into pot-boiling. The liaison with Murry of course lasted—though uneasily—and they eventually free to marry in 1918. In the second year of the war there was the death of her brother, which affected her deeply. There were endless moves: even before illness forced her to winter abroad, twenty-two different lodgings in five years were recorded. One of these, in 1916, was the notoriously ill-fated Cornwall.

It was a restless life partly because the relationship with Murry, we can see, was always unbalanced and unsatisfactory. Alpers is anxious to present a case for the hapless Murry, who publicly beat his breast after Katherine's death, was lampooned by Huxley as the odious Burlap in Point Counter Point, and was, according to Alpers, "one of

the most unpopular men to be found in the world of English letters" at the time of the 1953 biography (any book sponsored by him, he says, would have sunk without trace). Reinstalling Murry means, to some extent, showing what a mercilessly short woman he married; and Alpers does, though with sympathy for all. A good many people recorded being hurt or irritated by the cool, changeable Katherine: "really she is to be avoided," said Russell; her editor Orage wrote to her "You openly and awfully despised human beings and considered them fair game." Lawrence's friends—"Inhuman reptile," "mid-worm," "spit on her for me," "I hope you will die"—are beyond forgiveness. They were, of course, a pretty spiteful and dishonourable literary crew. But a sketch in Virginia Woolf's diary gives the unmistakable flavour of wily nastiness:

Murry came in with a pair of blue & pink Dresden candle pieces; "How very nice" she said. "But do fetch the candles." "Virginia, how useful what am I to say? He has spent £5 on them," she said, as he left the room. I see that they're often hostile. For one thing—Murry's writing. "Did you like C. & A. Murry's *Cinnamon and Angelica*?" No, I didn't. "Neither did I," but I thought D. of an I [this dreadful—wrong—its very difficult, often...]. Then Murry came back. We chatted as usual.

In fact, as Mansfield noted in her journal, she had just the kind of raging temper Lawrence had (Alpers describes it in their common illness—but were Cleckhous, Keats, and Emily Brontë notorious for rages?). My list of temper are really terrifying. I had one this morning and tore up a page of the book I was reading. . . . I was a deep earthy colour, with pinched eyes. . . . I am more like L. than anybody. . . . But what is impressive is her vigorous debate with her own violence in journals; just as Woolf's equally honest record of her mixed love and loathing for her rival Mansfield is.

But Murry was not made of the same stern stuff as the two women. While Mansfield wrestled with her self-dramatizations, Murry needed into his. Certainly Alpers shows him as to be pitied for having an ill and difficult wife; but what use, to a woman with a temperamental,

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# The busy musical Englishman

By Michael Trend

PERCY M. YOUNG:

George Grove  
34 App. Macmillan, £12.50.  
0 333 19602 3

To have had a father who was described in the following words by Charles Dickens was not a bad start in life:

I have consulted Mr. Groves [sic] of Charing Cross. His suggestive mind gave birth to this remarkable expression—then why not consider this here breast of woman, off—and let me get another prime 'un in good eating' order for you, for Stanley week? What—continued Mr. Groves?—'is the holds to day?'"

Mr. Groves slapped a piece of venison as he spoke, with the palm of his hand; and plainly signified, by his manner no less than by his words, that this was wisdom.

George Grove did not, however, follow his father into the business of "fishmonger and venison dealer", and although we know him today as the pre-eminent and first editor of the musical dictionary which bears his name, his life was one of such extraordinary diversity, industry and activity that a new biography is a welcome event, and especially as this year will see the publication of *The New Grove* (the sixth edition) by Macmillan. Percy Young, best known for his life of Elgar, but also a man of as varied interests as his present subject, has for many years been the official historian of the Waterbury-Warwickshire Foot-club, and has approached George Grove with great sympathy. Grove's life is a story which could easily be told without bringing the man alive but Dr. Young, taking the good with the bad and the successful with the slight, has managed to tell it with considerable skill.

Before George's birth in 1820 the Groves had moved to Clarendon, the "Holy Village", and there George received a sound education at Ewells School and then at Charles Pritchard's Clapham Grammar School, both "considered good" of their class, he later wrote. In 1835 Grove became apprenticed to Alexander Gordon, the engraver, and the next few years of his life were taken up in this training. He worked on the Morant Point Light-house in Jamaica and the Gibb's Hill Light-house in Bermuda. From light-houses he switched to railways and worked for a while at the Great Eastern Railway, and then on Stephenson's Britannia tubular bridge across the Mersey straits. From railways he turned to the sea, perhaps not such a startling step as it may seem today. Following the advice of Stephen Holt, Brunel and the architect Sir Charles Barry, Grove put himself forward for the post of Secretary of the Society of Arts in 1850. In 1852 he was appointed secretary to the Crystal Palace Company, and in 1853 he became a familiar figure in English life.

His interest in music was growing, and it was now that, along with August Manns the conductor, he began a celebrated series of concerts, and as a "G" wrote the programme notes. Grove was also developing his side as a writer, and he worked closely with Stanley, later Dean of Westminster, on his *Sino and Paganini*. For some years he helped William Smith on his *Dictionary of the Bible*, at the end of which time Dr. Young writes "it was clear that he had had a lion's share in its realization." Grove himself was thinking of producing a general *Dictionary of Persons* but that idea was left to others to realize. He was also instrumental in helping to set up the Publishing Exploitation Fund with Henry Layard.

His literary activities led him to be appointed editor of Macmillan's *Magazine* in January of 1874. He was also to manage the "Literary side" of Macmillan's publishing interests, and in the same month the prospectus for the *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* was issued. The work on this magnificent project took many years, and Grove was backed up by a good team of editors, in spite of the way things were going in the August of 1875 Grove

still felt that he was not really in control of his life:

Tomorrow I am 55 years old and what am I? As much a slave as I was at 35, or little more the attainment of any settled position of mind and spirit as I ever was. . . I ought not at my time of life to be a mere shuttlecock at the capricious will of the people who employ me or have the least claim on me. I might somehow have more weight and leisure—but I can't get it. And yet I feel in myself plenty of capacity.

Henry James, who met him in 1876, wrote of Grove as a very jolly old fellow—one of those London men of letters who have done lots of unorganized work. (He is sub-editor of Smith's *Illustrated* and writes much of it.)

Mr. James was clearly a very jolly old fellow, who still felt in his "plenty of capacity" was shortly to begin the final and crowning stage in his career. He was greatly involved with the attempt to found a new college of music in London and he was appointed Director of the Royal College of Music and knighted on its opening in 1883. He wrote to Mary Sullivan, the composer's mother, "I feel my incompetence, and am not able to behave at all like a small as I suppose I ought to be. However, I must try to do the best I can."

Over the previous years Grove had often worked with, or visited, distinguished men—"It was early in May 1854 when I led to an down to the Crystal Palace in the Isle of Wight. . . if he would write an Ode for the opening of the Crystal Palace, to be set to music by Berlioz"—but now at "concerts arranged to promote the College he found himself beside the Duke of Edinburgh who, in one evening, acted as composer, conductor and violinist. The Royal Family worked hard for the new College. On one occasion the Duke of Albany spoke at length about the superiority of English music. Talking of Wagner he mentioned in 'fact' the Duke that the round 'has hitherto been always taken as the earliest landmark in the history of modern music. We were a century and a half in advance of Paderewski, Italy, or Germany." (Renewed applause). . . this little glimpse of the direct and absolute superiority of the music of Handel, the symphonies of Beethoven, the operas of Wagner, is a purely English creation." (Applause). All this, as Dr. Young adds, in a guttural German accent.

Sir George's directorship of the college and his own personal development from this time until his death are much better documented than his earlier years. He wrote an extraordinary series of letters which Grove wrote to one of the College's very first pupils, Edith Oldham. Edith was from a Dublin family, and after her time at the college she returned to her native land, where she became a prolific letter writer (on one short holiday in Switzerland for example, he claimed to have written 193 letters and he asked all his ex-pupils to write to him at least once a year). Edith Oldham, however, was the main object of Grove's apostrophic attentions. If these letters had not survived we would know nothing about this very personal side of his life. Sometimes, in reading his letters, one almost feels that Grove was making a record of his own private life, and the increase in the depth of focus that one thereby obtains is remarkable.

From his public life we are able to get a fairly clear picture of Grove. He was, as Dr. Young points out, a great hand at writing letters to the Trustees. When one considers his early career it is not perhaps surprising that he felt able to turn to whatever he wished. He was like the great engineers of the Victorian period who knew that all the work of the world was bound to be done well as long as one got the engineering right, and in some cases, as extended this

attitude to literature. When asked to give away the prizes at a girls' school in Brighton, he told the girls "accuracy is far better than brilliance". Grove was very reliable. "I ought never to write a book without a Grove . . . in correct references and proofs", wrote Stanley. It was felt that he was a master of the "rules of science" and it was assumed that these rules could be brought to bear as well in one field as another.

He was also very inquisitive: on a trip to Germany with Arthur Sullivan in 1867 they engaged in active research into the lives and works of the great composers. They visited Karl Anton Spina, where, according to Sullivan's account, there was a very old clerk v. Doppler who had known Beethoven.

Grove's own musical tastes were very clear-cut. For him the supreme trinity of composers was Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn. He wrote the articles on them for the *Dictionary*. Beethoven

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A sketch of Otto Klemperer by Milou Casanini, from a collection of "anecdotes, sayings and impressions", *Klemperer Stories* (96pp, Robson Books, £4.95), compiled and edited by Charles Osborne and Kenneth Thomson. One of their stories is of the great conductor, well into his eighties, being asked by the cultural attaché of the Japanese Embassy if he would conduct a series of concerts in Japan in a point three years ahead. His response was immediate: "How do I know that Japan will still be there in three years' time?"

hoben and Schubert well (and he told us many things about them. Beethoven was a great Polish poet with frogs on it. I said 'Did you know Schubert?' 'Know him?' said he. 'Why I was at his funeral, I and was a pupil of his father's.'"

This trip ended with Grove and Sullivan discovering the hitherto missing part of Schubert's *Requiem*. In 1869 Grove was on the Continent again, this time bound for Naples, to check for his own satisfaction the stories connected with the supposed autograph of Beethoven's *Sonata* (Janet's blood).

His appointment as editor of the musical dictionary was one of considerable foresight. As a young man he had observed the great expense and non-availability of printed music for the vast majority of people, even of his own class, in England. During his long career he had a piano score for the *Illustrated*, for example, decreased dramatically, and in 1887 he wrote to *The Times* denouncing the commercial exploitation of Richard Wagner's music.

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Word and Action  
Knox on the Ancient Theater  
378pp, Johns Hopkins University Press, £10.  
0 8018 2198 3

Bernard Knox is a unique figure in the classical scholarship of America, and indeed in that of the world. Born in Bradford in 1914, he dropped out of St. John's College, Cambridge to fight in the Spanish Civil War as a machine-gunner in the French section of the International Brigade; he owed his survival to a severe wound that removed him from the final battles. Marrying a brilliant American wife, the novelist Bianca Van Orden, he migrated to the United States. During the Second World War his Spanish experience proved valuable when he was drafted behind the German lines to help the French forces, and later when he fought in Italy, he emerged from the war with a string of decorations and on a considerable command of European languages. Afterwards he took his daughter to Yale, and taught there for some years before becoming in 1901 the first holder of the newly created post of Director of the Royal College of Music. He was a man of great energy and vitality, and his passion for his work was such that he was often found in the laboratory at night, and in the morning he would be found in the laboratory at night.

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The most important of the pieces about Sophocles is the article on the *Ajax* of 1961. Knox points out that in this play we find examples of early Greek morality that one shows one's excellence by the good one does one's friends and the harm one does one's enemies. It is unhesitatingly accepted by Ajax; so it is by his enemy the goddess Athena; but it is rejected by Odysseus. Odysseus declines the goddess's invitation to gloom over his enemy in his madness and later intervenes to prevent the generals whom, like himself, Ajax has tried to murder from refusing his bad counsel in the end of the play. Odysseus recognizes the kind of thing that might happen as any man in any man, even to himself. Ajax, Knox remarks, is adopting an attitude proper only to a god; placed in a situation in which he will have to modify his attitude if he is to go on living, he prefers death.

In human life, Ajax says in the great speech, often referred to as "the speech of deception", nothing is permanent, all things change; in appearance he is willing to accept this state of affairs, but in reality, as his suicide proves, he utterly refuses to act in a way contrary to his nature. Knox is unwilling to allow that Ajax in this speech means to deceive his mistress and

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his soldiers; it would be unlike him, he argues, and in any case he could easily have left the text even against his will. I would prefer to say that Ajax wishes to avoid a struggle, and in giving expression to his newly found awareness of the instability of human life speaks with an irony, gentle though bitter, that is very much in character. Does Ajax really represent "the old morality"? Odysseus, another morality that is more up-to-date? The "old morality" was prevalent long after Homer (see Dover, *Greek Popular Morality*, page 180); and even in Homer a hero like Odysseus was very different from Ajax or Achilles. The book also contains reviews of two books on Sophocles, of W. B. Stanford's commentary on the *Antigone* of Corneille, and of the review of Müller, in full detail, is an admirable from the standpoint of technical scholarship as it is from that of literary appreciation.

In his article on Euripides' *Hippolytus* (1952), Knox starts by showing how the underwriting of the play must be damaged by any attempt to show that any one of the characters is "the hero", in relation to whom everything must be regarded. There follows a sensitive exposition of the action of the play, starting from the observation that each of the main characters in succession is confronted with a choice between speech and silence which will be decisive in its consequence.

As he says of the beginning: "In no other Greek tragedy is the pre-determination of human action by an external power made so emphatically clear"; but as he says later the action would still be plausible without the gods since "the external directing force works not against but through the characteristic thoughts and impulses of the characters involved". The play ends, he says, with an act of forgiveness, something possible only for human beings, not for gods but for































